

Message Text

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ACTION EA-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OPR-01 A-01 AID-05 CCO-00 USIE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-10

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-14

SCCT-01 SY-02 USSS-00 OMB-01 DRC-01 IO-03 /065 W

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O R 111121Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9514

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJ: DEMONSTRATIONS IN SAIGON

1. AT ABOUT 9:00 ON OCT 10, APPROX 150 TO 200 JOURNALISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS HELD AN OPEN AIR PRESS CONFERENCE IN FRONT OF VIETNAMESE JOURNALISTS UNION ON LE LOI STREET NEAR THE LOWER HOUSE. THEY DISPLAYED BANNERS AND POSTERS CARRYING SLOGANS DENOUNCING THE PRESS LAWS. JOURNALISTS STYLED THEIR PROTEST A "BEGGING DAY", AND SOME CARRIED BAGS WITH WHICH TO BEG FOR FOOD TO PROTEST FINANCIAL HARDSHIPS CAUSED THE PRESS BY APPLICATION OF PRESS LAWS. AFTER A FEW SPEECHES, THE JOURNALISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS INCLUDING SEVERAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS STARTED MARCHING TOWARD THE CENTRAL MARKET, PUSHING THROUGH A POLICE CORDON. ON THE WAY, A GROUP

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APPARENTLY LED BY MADAME NGO BA THANH JOINED THE MARCH.

2. GVN SOURCES ESTIMATED MADAME THANH'S ORIGINAL GROUP TO NUMBER 25, MAINLY BUDDHIST NUNS. OTHER COMPETENT SOURCES WHO POSSIBLY REFER TO A LATER TIME ESTIMATED THIS GROUP TO HAVE, AT MOST, 200 MEMBERS. AT ITS PEAK, BOTH GROUPS COMBINED INCLUDED FROM 150 UP TO A MAXIMUM 400 DEMONSTRATORS. (COMMENT: THE LOW FIGURE IS A GVN POLICE ESTIMATE, THE HIGHER ONE FROM AN AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMAT WHO OBSERVED THE SCENE. THE DIFFERENCE MAY RESULT FROM DIFFERING JUDGMENTS AS TO WHO WERE DEMONSTRATORS AND WHO SPECTATORS. IN ANY CASE, PRESS ESTIMATES IN THE THOUSANDS ARE CLEARLY EXAGGERATED AND ARE PROBABLY ACCOUNTED FOR BY FACT STREETS CROWDED WITH SHOPPERS AND ONLOOKERS. END COMMENT.)

3. AFTER REACHING MARKET AREA, MOST OF DEMONSTRATORS RETURNED TO THEIR STARTING POINT NEAR LOWER HOUSE, THOUGH TEN BUDDHIST NUNS REMAINED AT CENTRAL MARKET TRAFFIC CIRCLE AND SAT DOWN TO BLOCK TRAFFIC. MEANWHILE, BY ABOUT 11AM, THE JOURNALISTS HAD BEGUN TO DISPERSE. MADAME NGO BA THANH AND, ACCORDING TO POLICE REPORTS, 15 BUDDHIST NUNS RETURNED TO TRAFFIC CIRCLE AND CONTINUED THEIR DEMONSTRATION IN THE COURSE OF WHICH THEY THREW ROCKS AT THE POLICE.

4. AT ABOUT 3PM, A SMALL GROUP LED BY LADY DEPUTY KIEU MONG THU DEMONSTRATED IN FRONT OF THE LOWER HOUSE. THIS GROUP REPORTEDLY ATTRACTED ABOUT 100 SPECTATORS. IT WAS DURING THIS DEMONSTRATION THAT CBS REPORTER HANEY HOWELL WAS INJURED (SEPTTEL).

5. BY 5:50PM, ALL THE DEMONSTRATORS HAD LEFT THE LOWER HOUSE. 5 POLICEMEN WERE SLIGHTLY INJURED IN THE COURSE OF THE DAY.
MARTIN

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